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From “the editor



Thanks to the efforts of the Village Gardeners and their supporters we have all enjoyed a bright, flower-filled Spring.

What a difference flowers make - the village has even looked pretty in places!

In this edition, as well as the usual news and views, we have features on the village's new pre-school and more on Sonning Common's history. The Noticeboard and Diary Dates are full of details of upcoming events, so it looks like being a busy Spring all-round.

I am sad to say that I have decided to step down as editor of Sonning Common Magazine at the end of May, after the June/July edition has been put together. With my other commitments, I was finding there weren't enough hours in the day!

It really has been a pleasure editing this magazine and I am very grateful to the committee and to the wider community for all of the support and encouragement I have been given.

We are holding our annual general meeting in the village hall on Wednesday 18 May at 7.30pm. It would be great to see lots of you there to find out more about your community magazine.

Please come along - whether you are interested in getting involved with the magazine or not - and share some wine and nibbles. We want to turn the event into more of a social occasion and we promise not to ensnare you, unless, of course, you're willing to be ensnared!

Hope to see you there.



ROS VARNES Editor

Email me at:

sonningcommonmagazine@googlemail.com

ps...
 Sonning Common Magazine is on sale at the village library in Grove Road for £1.50 a copy. Annual subscriptions are available for £15. Contact distribution manager Geoffrey Adams. Email: geoffrey.adams5@btopenworld.com
 Phone: 0118 972 2134
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WHILE EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION PRINTED IN THIS MAGAZINE, THE EDITOR AND THE PUBLISHER CANNOT ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF ERRORS THAT OCCUR.

Contents

- 2 Community news:
 Gearing up for On Your Bike
 Help support the youth club
- 6-7 The latest on the Save Our Library campaign
 NHS reforms - what they mean
- 10 Noticeboard
- 14 In Focus: inside the village's new pre-school
- 19 Letters
- 20 Tom Fort
- 28 Diary Dates

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Families join together for On Your Bike

The organisers of the 5th annual On Your Bike cycle ride this weekend will be hoping the sun shines on the hundreds of cyclists set to take part.

Now the largest family cycle ride in Oxfordshire, On Your Bike has generated more than £10,000 for charity and seen over 1,700 cyclists participate since its inception in 2007.

This year's event will start from Sonning Common Primary School on Sunday 3 April at 10.30am. More than 600 people are expected to join in.

Routes of 6, 12 and 20 miles will be fully marshalled and there will also be a supervised playground cycle and buggy-friendly health walk. Something for the whole family will be on offer, with a special raffle for mothers since 3 April is Mothering Sunday.

On Your Bike hosted its first ever bike sale last month where sellers and buyers traded outgrown cycles, tag-alongs and bike seats. Sonning Common Health Centre held a bike clinic where sponsors AW Cycles were on hand to offer bike safety checks and maintenance advice.

The new website, www.onyourbikesonningcommon.co.uk has had a huge number of visitors and this year, for the first time, everyone has been able to register on line.

Penny Snowden, from the organising committee, said: "This event could not take place without the enthusiasm of the organising committee and all our sponsors and volunteers. Their generosity of time and funds has guaranteed that every penny of each entry fee is donated directly to the charities along with all sponsorship monies, raffle ticket sales and proceeds from refreshments."

"This year's chosen charities are the Sue Ryder Nettlebed Hospice, Sonning Common Primary School and the house charities of the Chiltern Edge pupils who enter.

"The organisers wish to thank everyone who has supported this event which has now become a real cross-community activity."



Sue Ryder



Youth centre under threat

Every week, some 80 or so young people aged between 11 and 19 spend their evenings at the Sonning Common Youth Centre.

It gives them somewhere warm and safe to meet their friends and engage in a range of sports and leisure activities.

In the summer there are barbecues and the centre also runs outings and courses, such as paintballing and a successful photography course. It is a facility that is greatly valued by the young people, as these comments from them show:

"It is a good place to go, for the pool and the music".

"We would really miss it".

"The youth workers are really nice".

The centre is based on the Chiltern Edge School campus, in premises owned, not by the school, but by Oxfordshire County Council.

Its running costs are kept to a minimum by the fact that most of the youth workers are volunteers, giving up their time at no cost to the public purse.

A good example of David Cameron's Big Society, you might think.

But the youth centre's future is under threat, following Oxfordshire County Council's decision to withdraw funding from September 2011.

The school, facing its own budget squeeze, is in no position to take over the burden, and the centre may face closure if it cannot find the £25,000 it needs to keep going for the next three years.

Some offers of help have been forthcoming: Sonning Common Parish Council has provisionally promised £4,500 a year, and Oxfordshire County Council has provided some transitional funding, giving the centre a limited amount of breathing space to raise

alternative sources of income.

But the reality is that most of the cost will need to be met from within the community.

Sonning Common has nothing else like the centre and, if it were to close, the young people would be reduced to meeting on street corners and shopping parades - a source of concern to some residents.

How can you help? The most obvious way would be by making donations - either on a one-off or a regular basis to the Youth Centre Fund. Cheques should be sent to Chiltern Edge School, made payable to the school but clearly marked, "Youth Centre Fund".

You may have ideas for fund-raising - if so, please contact Rosemary Edgington at the school. Or, if you want to know more about the centre's activities, possibly with a view to helping out in some capacity, please contact Jayne Robinson on 0118 972 4418. ■

Lions fund a dragon

The local Lions club has donated funds to allow Kidmore End Primary School to buy a new, innovative role-play unit.



Reception children used the unit to make a dragon to mark the Chinese New Year.

The role-play kit can be taken apart and re-formed to create a castle, house or shop to inspire the children in role-play and communication skills.

Foundation class teachers Katie Szmaglik and Lucy Andrews said: "It is so very adaptable and can easily be changed into different shapes, be covered in fabric, decorated and played with by the children. When the weather is bad they can stay inside with this and it helps stimulate their learning."

The 19-member Goring, Woodcote & District Lions Club aims to help people and projects in the local community and raises funds for charity throughout the year.

At the same time it is part of Lions Clubs International, the largest voluntary organisation in the world with over 1.3 million members worldwide and over 18,000 members in the UK.

Every pound donated to Lions by the public goes to charity with no administration charges taken out.

To learn more (without commitment) local Lions club members would be happy to meet with anyone wishing to join or help Lions to make a difference for people in need.

Please telephone: 0845 833 9837
e-mail: info@lions-gwd.org.uk
or view the website:
www.lions-gwd.org.uk



Lions Jon Solman (left) and David Freear with (L to R) George Malaperiman, Joseph Norris, Oliver McDonnell, Freddie Stewart, George Clark and Daisy Stevens from Kidmore End Primary School.

Keep it crafty!

Village resident Gwen Ryan is helping to keep crafts alive in Sonning Common with the launch of a new Crafty Wednesdays' Club.

Sessions will take place in Sonning Common Village Hall every Wednesday from 7.30pm to 9.30pm from 13 April.

Mrs Ryan is inviting anyone with an interest in crafts including knitting, embroidery, felt-making, crocheting, beading, braiding, lucet, weaving and spinning to join the club to help each other along with projects and patterns.

Contributions of £3 per person will be collected to cover the cost of hiring the hall and refreshments. ■

For further information contact Mrs Ryan on 07808 011887.



THE SONNING COMMON SOCIETY

The Sonning Common Society is seeking help to compile a register of local trees of special interest.

The trees must be located in or near to the village and would include:


- a tree planted to celebrate a special occasion
- a local landmark
- a tree having a distinctive shape or size
- a tree of historical interest
- an unusual species

If you are aware of any trees that may be suitable, perhaps in your garden, or close to your house, please pass the details to:

Mark Richards, chairman of Sonning Common Society. Phone: 0118 972 3939.
E-mail: mark.richards62@btinternet.com



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Villagers say 'no' to a DIY library service

To date around 270 local people have signed a petition to maintain county council funding for Sonning Common Library and its professional library manager.

This is in addition to the 570 letters and postcards which were handed to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) by the Friends of Sonning Common Library on 24 January.

A total of around 200 letters and emails were received in advance of the January handover by county councillor Carol Viney and John Jackson, OCC's director for social and community services.

This brings the total amount of correspondence received in support of Sonning Common's Save Our Library campaign to more than 1,000. In addition, over 200 people have joined the Save Sonning Common Library campaign on Facebook.

And in recent weeks, village resident Paul Lewis has launched a website (www.saveourlibrary.org) to support the Save Our Library campaign. The site also contains a link to the Save Oxfordshire's Libraries petition.

Ros Varnes, chair of the Friends of Sonning Common Library group, which runs the Save Our Library campaign, said: "We are very grateful to Paul for volunteering his time and expertise to set up the website. The site is full of information on campaign activities to date plus advice on how to get involved."

"If people feel strongly about the proposed closure of Sonning Common Library, they should continue to write to the county council and sign the paper petition, which is still available at the library. Public pressure can be extremely effective."

Public opposition to the proposed closure of 20 out of Oxfordshire's 43 libraries has been steadily growing since the county council announced its plans last November.

Supporters from the majority of the 20 libraries under threat, including Sonning Common, have banded together to form a new campaign group, Save Oxfordshire Libraries, and are pooling information, ideas and resources to fight the proposal.

The alliance believes that if cuts to the library service are necessary, they should be made fairly and equally across all 43 libraries in Oxfordshire.

The alliance has also written to the county council to say that a substantial majority of the 20 threatened libraries are opposed to bidding for funding to create a do-it-yourself library service, as the county council has recommended.

The county council is due to launch a three-month public consultation on the future of Oxfordshire's libraries in April, the details of which have not yet been announced. In mid-February councillors voted through a budget to include cuts of £2 million to the library service over the next four years.

Councillor Keith Mitchell, the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said: "The Big Society Fund is available for bids and will remain open for quite some time. At the same time, the council will undertake a consultation with an open mind about options for the future of libraries with no decision to be taken until the summer."

"We will work as closely as possible with communities to create positive outcomes despite the reduced financial circumstances across the public sector in the UK."

What are your views on Sonning Common Library? Please write to the editor.

Letters about Sonning Common Library should be addressed to:

COUNCILLOR JUDITH HEATHCOAT
Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities
Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND

(If people would like to drop them off at the library in Grove Road, the Friends group will count them before forwarding them to the county council).

Email the Friends of Sonning Common Library at foscl@ymail.com



Our new National Health Service



By JOHN PEARMAN

In January of this year the coalition Government launched the biggest restructuring of the NHS since 1948.

After a flurry of media attention the NHS reforms are now very much back page news, but behind the scenes the work is progressing to implement the Government's plans.

The White Paper – Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS - published in July 2010 sets out the Government's long-term vision which it hopes will be achieved by:

- putting patients at the heart of the NHS
- driving up quality and improving outcomes
- empowering local organisations and professionals
- cutting bureaucracy and improving efficiency

In order to shift decision-making as close as possible to patients, power and responsibility for commissioning services will be devolved

to local consortia of GP practices. The Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley, wants to give far more power and financial responsibility to doctors while making hospitals independent of state control, and this, he insists, will make the NHS more streamlined.

But what will it mean for us, the patients?

Some concerns have been expressed about the new reforms, particularly in giving GPs yet more duties. There are also fears from some commentators that the reforms are just a cover for the privatisation of the health service, with NHS hospitals competing with private companies for contracts handed out by GPs.

In reply, supporters of the reforms say that with rising costs and an ageing population with more chronic health problems, radical change is inevitable for the NHS to survive.

However, the basic principles of the NHS - a universal system, free at the point of use, funded by general taxation - will not change. ■

GPs to manage health services

From 2013 GPs are going to have a much bigger say in the way that the NHS is run.

Groups of GPs will have the responsibility for organising healthcare for their areas. These commissioning consortia will hold budgets for the provision of care by hospitals and other providers.

They will relate closely with social care, agree strategy, implement Government directives and drive up quality within the NHS.

They will seek views from the public and be held accountable to the population through Health and Wellbeing Boards run by the county councils. It is a big task. Consortia will replace primary care trusts.

Early Pathfinder Consortia have already been formed and the Oxfordshire group is the largest in England, covering 640,000 patients, split into six localities. The organisation has to be big enough to engage successfully with the big hospital trusts and Oxfordshire County Council,

but the localities have to be small enough to truly reflect local needs.

The press loves to criticise NHS bureaucracy but the reality is that our system spends only five per cent on management. That's the lowest in the developed world: the US spends 20 per cent.

Some would argue that the NHS needs more management, not less. There are always opportunities to make savings but as people live longer and as medical treatments become more expensive, we will have to look at doing some things differently, or not at all, if we are going to balance the books.

We will need to do this in partnership with our patients so that difficult decisions are made in a fair and open way. The interesting thing will be whether central Government does what it says and lets GP consortia and local people set the priorities they want. ■

Dr Andrew Burnett

SONNING COMMON HEALTH CENTRE

The magazine is grateful to Sonning Common Health Centre for supplying this article which first appeared in the latest recent health centre newsletter.



Wine, nibbles, talk

Interested in finding out more about Sonning Common Magazine? Then come along to our annual general meeting next month.

The magazine's AGM will take place in the village hall at 7.30pm on Wednesday 18 May.

If free wine and nibbles aren't enough to tempt you, then perhaps a talk by our columnist, local author Tom Fort, will be.

Tom will speak about his recent experience of making his first (and probably last!) television programme for the BBC at the age of 60, all about the A303, which passes Stonehenge. Fans of Tom's column will appreciate his own, particular brand of humour!

Developments on the magazine over the past year and future plans will be discussed at the AGM. And there will be an opportunity to learn more about the magazine's production process.

We particularly hope that our advertisers, without whom the magazine would not exist, will join us.

After several years as chairman, I am stepping down. Our editor, Ros Varnes, is also stepping down at the end of May due to family commitments. Craig Henderson, our secretary, is also leaving. So, there will be several vacancies on the committee.

But please come along - whether you are interested in volunteering to support the magazine or not. It will be a good opportunity to meet the committee and to find out more about the part our magazine plays in community life. ■

GRAHAM P THOMAS
Chairman

New season, new cricket pavilion

The 2011 season at Kidmore End Cricket Club should be very exciting with the opportunity to play in front of a brand new pavilion at Gallowstree Common.

Outdoor training for junior cricketers will begin on Mondays and Tuesdays as soon as the weather and work on the new pavilion allows.

The cricket club provides quality cricket for nearly 200 youngsters but relies heavily on parental help.

Any enquiries about junior cricket should be directed to Mark New: newm001@rbwm.org or 0118 948 1606 Or Cameron Livingstone-Smith: cls@livingstone-s.freeserve.co.uk.

THE SEASON AHEAD

The club season will begin on 16 April when Kidmore End 1st XI will visit Wokingham.

Morrant Thames Valley League matches begin on 7 May, with the 1st XI playing away against Falkland 2nds. The 2nd XI is at

home to Windsor 3rds, while the 3rd XI plays Cove 5ths away.

Thames Valley League matches have a new start time of 1pm this season.

Thames and Chilterns Sunday Competition matches begin on 15 May, when the 1st XI will be away at Windsor, starting at 2pm.

A full schedule of Saturday afternoon league matches at Gallowstree Common are available at: www.kidmoreend.play-cricket.com



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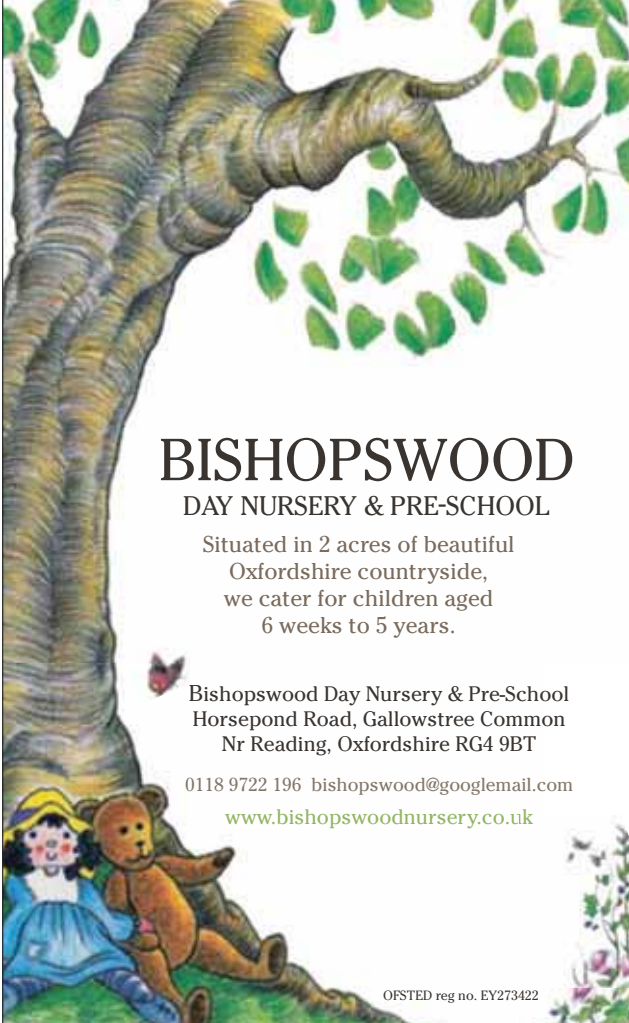
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Spring into learning

The new Spring into Summer and Lifestyle Learning brochures from Oxfordshire Adult Learning are out now.

You can pick up a copy from Sonning Common Library and other local outlets. View the wide range of courses online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/adultlearning or call 0118 972 3362 or 0845 351 0646 for more details.

Workshops coming up on Saturday 14 May are Experimental Gilding, Life Drawing Under Theatre Lighting and Can't Draw, Will Draw.



Big Sing day for charity

Nottakwire Singers will be raising the roof of the village hall at their first Big Sing charity day on 14 May.

There will be a variety of live music throughout the day. Sonning Common Primary school children will be among the groups performing and the day will end with a Sound of Music singalong!

The programme will be shown on the back of entry passes, which are available from Occasions, in Wood Lane, Nottakwire members or at the door on the day.

Passes will cost £2.50 per adult and £1 per child, aged 10 or under, and will allow for re-entry to the hall throughout the day. Light refreshments will be on sale all day, between musical sessions and there will be a raffle.

The event will run from 10am - 4.30pm to raise money for the local community responders team who operate under the auspices of the South Central Ambulance Service.

FREE SPRING CONCERT

All Saints' Church, Peppard, is holding a free Spring concert on Saturday 14 May at 7.30pm.

It will feature a programme of songs by Brahms, Schumann, Montsalvatge and Gershwin on the themes of life and love.

Mezzo Marion Olsen will perform along with Nigel Foster on the piano.

A retiring collection will be made for Christian Aid.



Visits to London for adult students

The Reading branch of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) will be mounting an interesting and varied mixture of courses, starting in May.

Val Pretlove will be presenting a seven-week course which explores Soho, to include three visits to this lively area of London. Val will also be running a course which looks at Bloomsbury, home to many fine squares and museums.

Art history and architecture again feature in the summer programme, along with music. The WEA is marking the centenary of the death of composer Gustav Mahler with a seven-week course led by Gwyn Parry-Jones and an evening meeting at Randolph College.

There will also be day schools on the Ballet Russes in England, Below Stairs in the English Country House and the Mastery of Space.

Copies of the summer brochure are available from the WEA website or from WEA Reading, 27 Derby Road, Reading, RG4 5HE. Phone: 0118 946 4137.



Come to tea?

Sonning Common will be having its own celebration on the day that Prince William marries Kate with a special tea party in the village hall.

The party, to celebrate village and community life, will take place on the Royal wedding day on Friday 29 April at 3.30pm.

Tickets, at £3 a head, will be on sale at Occasions in Wood Lane from 1 April.

The organisers - Sue Frayling-Cork, Carole Lewis, Jill Vallis, Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury and Susan Rusman - are hoping their traditional cream teas and homemade cakes will be impossible to resist!



Guides to re-open

The 1st Peppard Guides group is to re-open on 9 May. It is being re-started by Jo Waugh and Merryn Ough, both of whom have a lot of Guiding experience and enthusiasm. The group will run on Monday nights from 7-8.15pm (venue to be confirmed).

Guides is open to girls aged 10-14. If you would like your daughter to join or go on the waiting list, please email Jo at squirreljo@yahoo.ie



Girlguiding

CHILTERN PLAYERS

THE TRIALS OF LIVING TOGETHER

Chiltern Players' Spring production is Living Together, the second in Alan Ayckbourn's acclaimed Norman Conquests trilogy.

It follows on and overlaps with the action from the first play, Table Manners, and depicts the same six characters over the same weekend in different parts of the house.

Annie's brother Reg with his wife Sarah have come to spend the weekend at Annie's so she can go away for a couple of days as respite from caring for their demanding mother.

But her intended weekend lover is not, as expected, amiable but boring vet Tom. Instead, he is larger-than-life, sex-on-legs Norman, her sister Ruth's husband. When Annie calls their trip off, Norman decides to stay on at the house and gets roaring drunk.

What follows is an entertaining but perceptive insight into family dynamics and relationships told with Ayckbourn's signature wit and humour, at times almost bordering on farce.

Performances take place at 8pm, from Wednesday 13 to Saturday 16 April, at Peppard War Memorial Hall, Gallowstree Road, Rotherfield Peppard. Tickets are £8 and available from Occasions, Wood Lane, Sonning Common or from 0118 972 2201.

CAROL EVANS



TWO MUSICAL ERAS CONVERGE

South Chiltern Choral Society is offering people the rare opportunity to hear two very different works at its Spring concert.

The choir will perform Beethoven's 'Mass in C', written in 1807 and 'Gloria' by Karl Jenkins, which was first performed at the Royal Albert Hall last year. The setting will be the magnificent Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel at Pangbourne College.

The choral society will be joined by four young soloists from the Royal Academy of Music, accompanied by the South Chiltern Orchestra under their conductor, Gwyn Arch.

The concert will take place on 16 April at 7.30pm. Tickets are available from Linda Rumble on 0118 9543193, priced £12 or £6 for under-18s. For further information see the choir's website: southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk

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THE ANSWER TO A

prayer



For a building that nearly-never-was, Sonning Common's new pre-school is something of a triumph for our community.

After months of meticulous planning, the drama and dismay of the building grant being suspended, the fight to get it reinstated and the relief at seeing the construction work finally get underway meant an emotional roller-coaster ride for everyone involved.

Now the children are due to move into the new building after Easter and they are getting really excited.

Sonning Common Pre-school is just £3,000 short of its fund-raising total of £12,000 to equip and furnish the new building, thanks to the continued efforts of the pre-school's fund-raising team and the on-going support of the local community.

Pre-school manager Clare Saunders said: "I want to say a huge thank you to the fund-raising team and to the committee who have done an amazing job. Also, to the local businesses and organisations which have

been so generous. This has been one of the hardest times in which to fund-raise.

"I am also extremely grateful to all of the staff, the parents, and, of course, the children who have coped so well with the extremely cramped conditions in the old library building in Grove Road, which has been our temporary home since last November."

The old pre-school building, just off Grove Road, was demolished last year after the £450,000 grant from Oxfordshire County Council for the new build was reinstated.

The new cedar-clad pre-school has a 60-year lifespan to ensure it can provide a safe, welcoming and stimulating environment for village children for generations to come.

The building is bright and airy with floor-to-ceiling windows and no stairs, so will be suitable for disabled children. It will include plenty of toilets - five in total, including an accessible toilet - so no more 'holding on'!

The kitchen forms part of the classroom so the children will be able to get involved with preparing snacks and there is also a great new, messy play area, sure to be popular.

Outside, a fantastic new garden has been designed, thanks to the voluntary efforts of Jess Sarson, landscape architect and mother of pre-school twins Sophie and Charlotte.

It will contain a covered terrace for play, vegetable beds, a large grassed area, sandpit and wooden playhouse. Part of the garden will be dedicated to the memory of Kate Luckett, who ran the pre-school for many years.

In coming weeks the pre-school team will be setting up the kitchen, installing new furniture and generally equipping the pre-school with toys and learning materials. Said manager Clare: "It will be so lovely to have new furniture and not to have to make do with our tatty, old stuff that was well past its sell-by date!"

Thirty children can now be accommodated at each play session. For further information contact the pre-school on 0118 972 4760 or see www.sonningcommonpreschool.co.uk

Sonning Common Pre-school Garden Design



Forthcoming fund-raising events to mention:

FAMILY RACE NIGHT

Saturday 7 May, 6.30pm, Sonning Common Primary School main hall

BOOGIE BOUNCE & BBQ

Sunday 12 June, 12pm, Sonning Common Pre-School

A PRE-SCHOOL OPEN DAY

is scheduled for Saturday 16 April at 2pm. Everyone is welcome.

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP:

- The old pre-school being demolished

OPPOSITE PAGE MIDDLE FROM L-R:

- Dexter Hampton, aged 3, in the new pre-school
- The interior of the new pre-school
- The new cedar-clad pre-school

THIS PAGE TOP:

- The plan for the pre-school garden

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Photos to treasure

When your hobby becomes your livelihood it must make for a very satisfying job.

Always a keen photographer, Tara Taylor decided to launch her own limited photography company from her home in Emmer Green in 2005.

Since then she has built up a strong reputation locally, particularly for taking portraits, but can turn her hand to anything from school photos and weddings to corporate head shots and commercial events.

Some of Tara's food photos from a restaurant shoot in Bray were recently published in Hello! magazine.

Said Tara: "I love taking photographs. It's great when you can see you've got the right shot through the camera. Clients don't always understand what I'm doing until they see the photos!"

"I most enjoy doing family and wedding photographs - I seem to have infinite patience with other people's children - and it's lovely to be able to put together beautiful albums for people to treasure."

Tara is always on the look-out for suitable backdrops for her atmospheric images - old buildings, graffiti walls, woods and flower-filled fields are among her favourite settings.

Using natural light is always rewarding but Tara has a full range of portable studio equipment and lights which she can set up anywhere to suit individual commissions.

Not one to be complacent, Tara regularly undertakes refresher training to add to her City and Guilds qualifications. That way she stays up-to-date with the latest photography techniques. She has worked with some of the country's top social photographers, who usually take pictures at various celebrity events.



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OBITUARY: MARY OSERS

Former magazine editor dies

Mary Osers, who died on 11 February this year, aged 92, was the editor of Sonning Common Magazine from 1979 to 1981. She was then chair of the magazine committee until 1989.

While she was living at Lashbrook House, Shiplake, Mary always enjoyed reading the magazine to catch up with village news and she marvelled at its glossy content and front cover.

In her early days as editor, the magazine was produced by roneo machine - a particularly messy process - and later printed by an industrial therapy unit in Caversham. ■

EWALD OSERS
 Reads Lane



Pictured are the members of the 1987 committee in Sonning Common Village Hall.

FROM LEFT: John Townsend, treasurer, Graham Damp, advertising, Dick Denning, distribution, Petra North, vice-chair, Mary Osers, chair, Tom North and Julie Colson, editor.

In-store music is really irritating

Initially I was pleased that Somerfield had been taken over by the Co-operative Society.

I was impressed with what had been done in terms of increasing the floor space, expanding the range of goods available (such as the in-store bakery) and so on.

However, now I only go into the store when I unexpectedly run out of items such as milk.

I find the noise from the in-store Co-op radio station very disruptive; I very much dislike the screaming pop music and the announcements about Co-op offers make it difficult to concentrate. Frankly, I can't wait to get out.

I wonder if other Sonning Common residents feel the same way? I know from conversations I have had in the shop that other customers share my point of view, but how widespread the feeling is, I can't say. ■

GRAHAM P THOMAS
 Woodlands Road

The Co-operative responds:

Many of our customers have given us positive feedback with regards to our in-store radio, saying that it creates a pleasant and relaxing shopping environment.

As a community retailer the views of local residents are very important to us. We do appreciate Mr Thomas' comments and will certainly take them into account should the in-store radio be reviewed.

The co-operative

Needed: building materials for children

I wonder if any local builders or DIY enthusiasts have any resources the children from Sonning Common Pre-School could use for construction play in the garden?

We are looking for drain pipes, guttering, tyres and planks. All of these things are great for the children's development; creative play, physical development, social skills and problem solving.

If anyone has anything suitable they can drop it off at the pre-school in Grove Road, or call the pre-school on 0118 972 4760 to arrange collection. ■

Thank you.

JO LAWSON
 Sonning Common Pre-school



Tom Fort

FACIAL HAIR

I had a beard once. Fortunately, no photographic evidence of it survives, but I do not think it was a becoming affair.

It grew in angry red clumps connected by stretches of thin stubble, and I remember that it itched a great deal.

I grew it in the summer of 1971 when on a trip to Turkey and Iran with two university pals. When I got back after two months without having had any contact with my family beyond the occasional

airmail letter – no mobiles or email then – I was greeted at the front door by my grandmother.

"Darling, it's wonderful to see you. You will have that shaved off tomorrow, won't you?" she said, with a loving smile. And I did, of course, because in those days even rebellious students did what their grannies told them.

At about the same time my eldest brother, who is much hairier than me, grew a Solzhenitsyn beard (as sported by the celebrated Russian novelist), which jutted out luxuriantly below a clean-shaved mouth and upper lip.

He did so purely with the aim of annoying our mother and our stuffy elderly relatives. When they and everyone else got used to it, he got bored and hacked it off.

There are still plenty of beards around. One of my favourites is attached to the friendly features of Mick in the world's finest shop, Heath and Watkins. I expect there must have been a time when he didn't have it, but I find it impossible to picture him clean-shaven.

Moustaches, on the other hand, have become a threatened species, except when grown for charity when they generally

do not last long. They are like hitchhikers – they used to be everywhere many years ago, and then they just disappeared.

Maybe we need a campaign for the Preservation of Moustaches. I wonder if the Lottery Fund would consider a grant. ■



EASTER CHURCH SERVICES

CHRIST THE KING CHURCH,
SONNING COMMON

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST
CHURCH, KIDMORE END

SUNDAY, 10 APRIL

Annual Parochial Church Meeting, following the 10am service at Christ the King

GOOD FRIDAY, 22 APRIL

The day of the Crucifixion. The Procession of Witness will start from Christ the King car park at 10am

Good Friday Service of Meditation, with music, at St John's, 2pm

EASTER DAY, 24 APRIL

Eucharist at Christ the King, 9.30am

Sung Eucharist at St John's, 11am

Our clergy and members wish all readers a Happy Easter.

NEIL SCOTT

(on behalf of the Parochial Church Council)

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH,
ROTHERFIELD PEPPARD

GOOD FRIDAY, 22 APRIL

Morning Prayer and Litany, 10am

Devotional Hour, 2pm

EASTER DAY, 24 APRIL

Holy Communion, 9am
Sung Eucharist, 10.30am
Festal Evensong, 6.30pm

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LENTEN ACTIVITIES

Friday evenings, Stations of the Cross and Meditation, 7pm

Sunday evenings, Adoration and Benediction, 5pm

SATURDAY, 16 APRIL

Vigil Mass, 5.30pm

PALM SUNDAY, 17 APRIL

Masses at 9am and 10.30am

MONDAY, 18 APRIL

Service of Reconciliation, 7pm

MAUNDY THURSDAY, 21 APRIL

Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7pm - 10pm

GOOD FRIDAY, 22 APRIL

Walk of Witness from Christ the King, Sedgewell Road, 10am

Stations of the Cross, 11am

Solemn Liturgy, 3pm

EASTER SATURDAY, 23 APRIL

Vigil and First Mass of Easter, 9pm

EASTER SUNDAY, 24 APRIL

Masses at 9am and 10.30am

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THURSDAY, 21 APRIL

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WHO SAYS FISH don't need bicycles?

BY ROS VARNES



When Sonning Common sculptor Daren Greenhow heard that when a client first met his wife she was sporting a badge saying, 'Women need men like fish need bicycles', he knew the ideal present for her 40th birthday - a fish on a bicycle!

Most of Daren's ideas for his steel sculptures come about through commissions and one idea often leads to another.

Recent work has included a Scotsman bearing a sword and shield, made largely from bicycle components - the intended centrepiece for the foyer of The Clansman Scottish ferry.

He also specialises in eagles, dragonflies, even dinosaurs and currently has a model of a velociraptor in his garden!

Daren, a former scientist, became a professional sculptor seven-and-a-half years ago. He now sculpts full-time from his home in Old Copse Gardens and exhibits at art galleries and

shows all around the country, including Wisley RHS Gardens.

Most of his artworks are made from old bicycle parts but he has also been known to raid the kitchen for various utensils, even taking the sword from his household's own suit of armour for his clansman model.

Daren buys most of his bikes from the Sue Ryder Hospice at Nettlebed - bikes which are beyond repair and unsuitable for resale. So, Daren benefits from recycling a steady supply of old bikes while the hospice does not have to pay to have them disposed of.

Friends often leave bikes on his driveway, so there is no shortage of new material to work with. However, local children have been known to perch in trees behind his house and ask for bikes they like the look of - Daren rarely refuses them.

Daren used to develop insecticides for ICI near Bracknell and likens building sculptures to building molecules.

"Being a sculptor is similar to being a chemist," he says. "I used to put atoms together to

build molecules. Now I put parts of old bikes together to build 3-D models.

"Working in sculpture is definitely more satisfying. At the end of each day I feel a real sense of achievement because I can see that I have made something - although being a sculptor doesn't pay as well as being a scientist."

As a child, Daren enjoyed making models before graduating to working on old cars as a hobby. But even then he would take a saloon car and turn it into a convertible, so the urge was always there to create something new from the original form. ■

**From 7 to 15 May Daren will be exhibiting some of his work at The Quern's Gallery, Path Hill, near Gallowstree Common, as part of the Oxfordshire Artweeks Festival. He and 34 of his fellow artists will be displaying a wide variety of indoor and outdoor work for sale.*

For further information please see: www.querns-fine-art.com. Or visit Daren's website at: www.darengreenhow.com



TOP FROM L-R:

- A fish on a bicycle
- Daren's stock of old bikes ready to be refashioned
- Daren's recent clansman sculpture.

ABOVE:

- Sculptor Daren Greenhow



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Lords and masters OF THE PAST

After the common land disappeared with the enclosures of the early 19th century, the scattered families of Sonning Common continued to work on local farms. Until the end of the century little changed.

Who owned the land they worked on mattered little; agricultural labourers were beholden to the farmer who rented the land. But who were these remote and important landowners?

All through the 19th century the land was in the hands of very few families. Robert Palmer (not the biscuit man) was the lord of the manor of Sonning. This included Sonning Common, as the poor heathland at the north of the parish. He also owned the

woodland of New Copse and Bird in Hand wood.

In 1841 Blounts Court is recorded as having been owned by Charles Elsee. His estate included a number of fields to the south of Wood Lane (where Grove Road now runs), also Reddish Manor and adjoining land.

This land was later bought by the Baskervilles of Crowsley Park. They became the most important land holders in Sonning Common, owning most of the land that was not held by Bishopswood Farm.

The family lived as prosperous hunting and shooting country gentry during the Victorian era. John Baskerville made an inventory of his wine cellar on 5 March 1877 which ran as follows:

64 bottles port, 264 Madeira, 56 Langoa claret, 6 best claret,

10 pints Langoa claret, 79 Marsala, about 36 dozen in cask, 50 champagne, 57 light claret, 37 pints light claret, 72 Poudiac, 21 sherry, 2 sherry, 18 brandy ... !!!!

At the beginning of the 20th century the Baskervilles gradually sold off their land with Red House Manor finally being sold in 1927.

Grove Road was created and houses began to be built along it in the late 19th century.

Baskerville Road was laid down. Houses were built in Kennylands Road, Woodlands Road and along Peppard Road.

Developers came on the scene. William Fisher of Caversham sold land to Arthur Janes who set his mark on Sonning Common. He built numerous houses in the village instantly recognisable by their solid red brick frontages with a door in the middle and pleasing proportions (viz Wood Lane, Sedgewell Road).

This was the period when Sonning Common began to grow and resemble the village we know today. The grip of the landowners was gradually loosened. Villagers came from all sorts of backgrounds, now hardly anyone would have called themselves agricultural labourers.

There was only one other landowner in the village. Bishopswood Farm was independently owned and farmed by one family. The farm originally belonged to James Atkyns Wright of Crowsley Park and in 1820 the Holland family were its tenants.

However, in 1822, James' widow gave William Holland £4,000 to buy the 200-acre mixed farm. This was said to have been one of the first farm mortgages ever given and the Holland family farmed the land until 1880.

During the century they diversified into fruit, growing cherries, apples, berries and nuts. When Thomas Holland died the farm then passed to William Saunders, his son-in-law, who ran it until the land was sold to John Elwell in 1917.

Bishopswood Farm has remained a substantial unit to this day, surviving the decline of the old landowners.

JILL KENDAL

Jill's next article will explore the village's early commercial history ...



Jill Kendal, from Gallowstree Common, is an amateur local historian and the author of a booklet about Sonning Common in the 19th century entitled, *A Little World Apart*. She taught at Sonning Common Primary School until 1994 and is involved with many local organisations.

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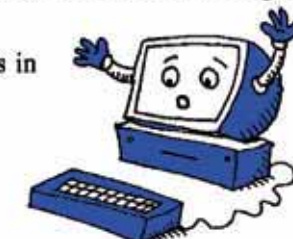


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FRIDAY 8 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm	FRIDAY 15 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.30/9.45am	SUNDAY 17 Peppard Bowls Club - open afternoon Peppard Memorial Hall 2.30pm	MONDAY 18 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 7.30pm
THURSDAY 21 FISH - Pub lunch 11.30am	THURSDAY 21 Sonning Common Women's Institute - Wood Sculptures by Pat Main Village Hall 7.30pm	MONDAY 25 Sonning Common Society - Easter walk Village Hall 10am	WEDNESDAY 27 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.30/9.45am
WEDNESDAY 27 Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - Winning water gardens by John Negus Chiltern Edge School 7.30pm	MONDAY 2 Sonning Common Society - Spring walk Village Hall 10am	MONDAY 2 FISH - Garden centre visit 1.30pm	FRIDAY 6 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm
SATURDAY 7 Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - Table top sale Village Hall 9.30am	FRIDAY 13 Nottakwire practice Village Hall All day	SATURDAY 14 Big Sing Day by Nottakwire Village Hall All day	MONDAY 16 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 7.30pm
THURSDAY 19 FISH - Pub lunch 11.30am	FRIDAY 20 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm	SATURDAY 21 Kidmore End School Association - Spring fair and village day Kidmore End School 2 - 5pm	FRIDAY 27 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am

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